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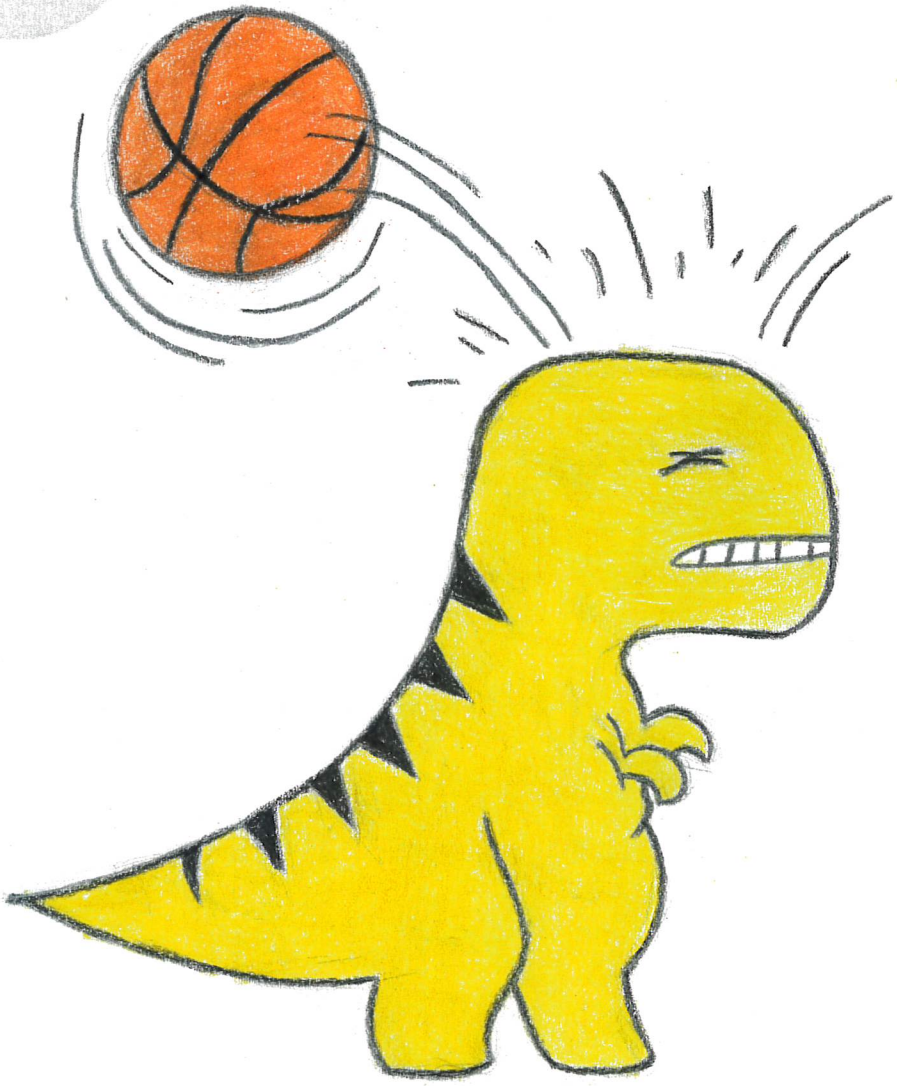


Comfortable Pain

The Comfortable Pain of SOUL

Content Warning: This article contains spoilers for the Pixar film Soul.

You know how there are some movies that upon your first time watching, you know they'll change your life forever? Well, Pixar's movie *Soul* was that for me. The first time I watched *Soul* was during lockdown in 2020. I was sitting on the couch with my aunt when we decided watching this movie would be a good and simple way to spend our evening. Little did I know, this film would quite literally give me the biggest emotional crisis and make me re-evaluate everything in my life.

Soul centers around a man named Joe Gardner, a pianist and middle school band teacher in New York City. He gets an opportunity to play alongside his longtime idol, Dorothea Williams. Unfortunately, he falls into a sewer and then into the "Great Before," which is where souls are created before they're dropped into Earth. He says he's not ready to die because his "real life" hasn't started yet. He believes it'll start after he plays with Dorothea. To avoid death and try to get back to Earth, he mentors a soul named 22. 22 is infamously unwilling to start life on Earth because she's incredibly uninterested in human life. After a few shenanigans, Joe and 22 end up on Earth, but 22 is in Joe's body.

While navigating the city, 22 becomes interested in some of the smallest experiences in human life. She enjoys the taste of food, listening to live music, cloud gazing, and watching helicopter seeds fall. Joe sees this and understands that contrary to his initial belief, his life was worthwhile and beautiful before he got to play with Dorothea. At the end of the film, he gets a second chance at life and decides he's going to "live every minute of it."

As you can see, this film dives deep into some philosophical topics and makes you do a lot of thinking. Some people may not want to make their brains do a lot of work while watching a movie, and that's completely valid. Since this is a family friendly movie, it's a bit easier to comprehend these philosophical ideas with the fun story and dialogue.

There's one quote specifically that I think really encapsulates the whole point of the movie. It goes as follows:

"I heard this story about a fish. He swims up to this older fish and says, 'I'm trying to find this thing they call the ocean.' 'The ocean,' says the older fish, 'That's what you're in right now.' 'This,' says the young fish, 'This is water. What I want is the ocean.'"

Wow!

Doesn't that make your brain do a flip or something? It's such a clever way to communicate the message in a way that's understandable for all audiences. When I first heard this, I had to take 20 steps back and re-evaluate my whole existence. It made me think about everything I had done in my life up until then, and I was able to start accepting my life as it was.

We all have dreams and goals we want to achieve in our lives. Those could be for your personal life, career, financial, etc. It's common to

feel like we're just floating through every day until those goals are reached. Once we get that big thing we want, that's when our lives will truly begin. However, that's not true. Life is what we're all living

right now. Even if you think your life is mundane, it's still beautiful and worth savoring. Don't wait for your "real life" to start, because it already has.

Flying Solo: Finding Peace in Being Single

So, being single, huh?

As we all know, Valentine's Day has just passed. This can be a really fun day for some, and a very lonely one for others. More often than not, I have found myself leaning toward the latter.

I have not been in many relationships, and I sometimes struggle with accepting the fact that that is okay. However, today will not be one of those days.

My last relationship ended almost two years ago. Since then, I have had a few situationships develop and fizzle out while I've witnessed many of my close friends find partners of their own. I am very supportive of their relationships, as they and their partners are all really good people. That being said, I have had plenty of days where I have felt extremely lonely and depressed.

I have had days where I have lost hope, and other days where I think something good might be coming around the corner. Through it all, though, I have learned a few key lessons that I think are essential to growing as a person, and, if this applies to you, coming to terms with being single.

When my last relationship ended, I was in the midst of one of the loneliest points in my life. I won't go into any details, but it was not a fun time for me. After the breakup, my life began to change for the better. I spent a lot of time weighing all of the pros and cons of the relationship, and realized that I was better off without the other person. An important part of dealing with a breakup is taking the time to consider whether you were supposed to be with the other person, and how you feel about your life now that they are no longer there.

After the semester was over, I came home and began to think about how I wanted to spend my summer now that I was single. Would I just mope around all the time and be depressed about losing my girlfriend? No, I was not going to do that. If I did, I would have only felt worse afterwards.

Being single was not all bad—it meant that I could now do what I wanted to do with my life without having to think about how my plans would affect my relationship. One of these things was spending a week at my grandfather's campsite that July. That was a really peaceful and enjoyable trip, and I greatly appreciated being able to spend that time with him. I love being outdoors, and I also love spending time with my grandfather. Granted, I still would have gone to his campsite even if I was in a relationship, but going on that trip after my breakup was probably one of the best decisions I could have made at that point in time.

Perhaps one of the best things you can do for yourself at any point in your life, single or otherwise, is finding good, supportive friends—people you can lean on for support and joke around with. No one has to go it alone, and no one should feel like they have to, either. If you are able to find even one person to hang out with and open up to, whether platonically or romantically, you are doing well for yourself. Quality over quantity is always better when it comes to social interactions—take it from an introvert like me.

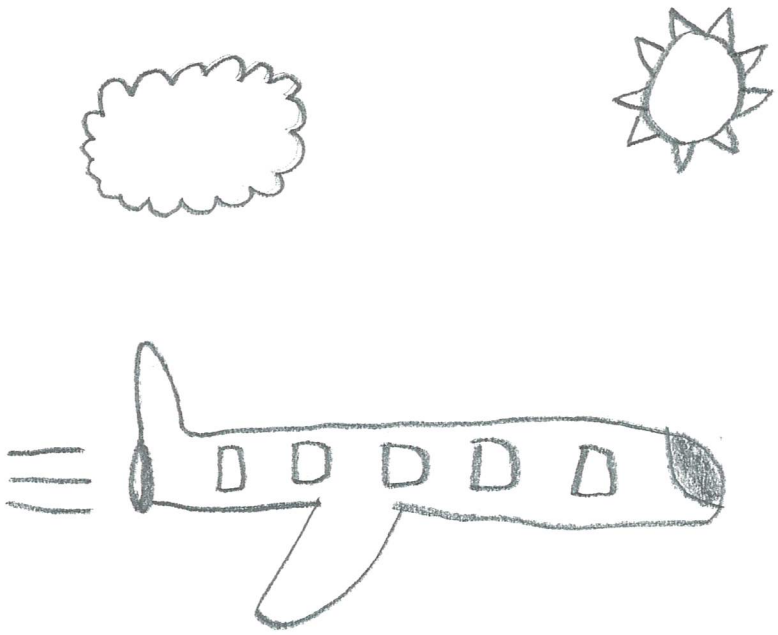
While you are single, think about all of your interests and passions and really hone in on a few of them. Try that puzzle that you've had in your closet for six years. Pick up your paintbrush and paint something amazing. Watch that movie that you and your mom said looked good. Whatever it is you've been putting off, do it. Do it and don't think twice about it. If it is interesting to you, then it is worth pursuing.

I already mentioned that I went camping with my grandfather, but one of the other things I revisited was my passion for sports history. I thought about everything I enjoyed about my favorite sports, and I started writing about them again. A little ways down the line, one of my cousins reached out to me and I got a job writing for a football blog; I have been writing for that blog ever since. Had I not taken the time to find my identity after my breakup, I may not have seized this opportunity.

Over the last year and a half, I have rebuilt my social life and reconnected with some old friends. Although I have had my share of lonely days since then, I know that I am not completely alone. Life is not linear, not every day will be a good day. At the same time, though, not every day will be bad. The road of life is one of many hills and curves, many peaks and valleys, and wondering about what is ahead is what makes life worth living.

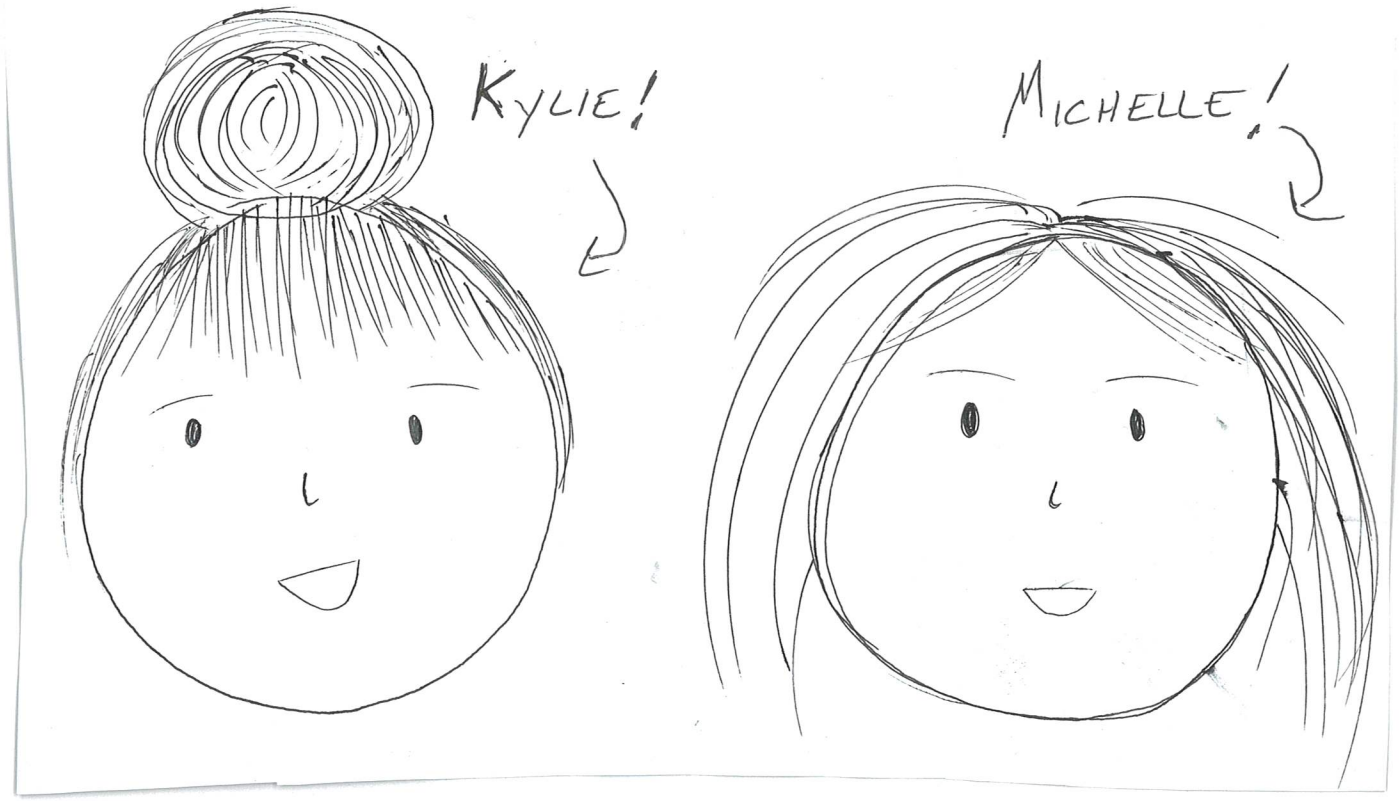
Even though I am single, I still have a lot to live for. There is a lot more to life than being in a relationship, and I wish I had learned that sooner. I am a mighty one-man army, and I have many things I would like to do in this life, many goals I would like to achieve.

If you are feeling down about being single, I hope this helped, if even a little bit. The storm will not last forever, there will be better days ahead. Cherish your friends, your loved ones, and your pets. Be kind, be funny, and most importantly, be yourself.



There are better days ahead!

Patrick Rock



By Kylie McHugh and Michelle Freeland

Kylie - Hi, my name is Kylie!

Michelle- And I'm Michelle!

Kylie- For this issue, we decided to talk about comfort shows, both sad and happy. When Michelle and I first met in our first semester, we realized that we had watched so many of the same shows. We were able to laugh about shows like *New Girl* and *Gilmore Girls* and cry about shows like *Fleabag* and *Normal People*.

Michelle: One of the first conversations Kylie and I ever had was about *Fleabag* and we were able to bond over the way we felt so much comfort from a somewhat painful show. *Fleabag* follows the story of Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who plays Fleabag, as she goes through grief, self-destruction, and finding herself, as well as finding love.

Kylie: I totally agree. Those final lines can break your heart but also give such a peaceful way to leave. Watching Connell say, "I'll go," and Marianne says, "And I'll stay, and we'll be okay" is so sad and makes me cry every time, and yet you feel a bit of joy because the two of them are content and have plans for their future, even though it won't be together.

Michelle: There's something beautifully unique in a writer's gift to wrap up a show, the entire show's legacy almost rides on the last episode and whether it will provide comfort or distress. *New Girl* comes to mind when thinking about fulfilling endings. We see the main characters and their kids in the future playing a version of "True American" and embracing life's changes. *New Girl* is a hard show for some people to like as they find the characters too "adorkable", a term used to market the show in early years, while I find it the perfect balance of ridiculousness and comfort. When having a bad day, I run to the T.V. to turn on *New Girl* to erase the pain or embarrassment *Fleabag* is a show that has stuck with me since the first time I watched it. From helping me start to understand the complexities of love and relationships to being something more meaningful when I visited London. I felt that I had been transported into the show when studying in London with FYSAE, from having staring contests with foxes, to sitting on benches in Dartmouth park, and strolling the Tate Modern. Something I hold dearly from the show itself is when the Priest and Fleabag say, "I love you" and, "it'll pass."

My best friend and I have discussed for months now about getting "it'll pass" tattooed on our hands, not only as an ode to the show but to ourselves and the way we face life. I will always hold London in my heart, along with the good and the bad that life has to offer, with every challenge and every step I know that "it'll pass".

Kylie: Fleabag was one of the first characters that, to me, showed a normal human being and showed how it's okay to make mistakes and

knowing that the characters within the show will do something 10 times more embarrassing than I ever will. Not only do we as audiences find comfort in the friendly dynamic but we also thrive off of something that feels real but can easily become extremely satire at any given moment, taking away the harsh realities of the day.

Kylie: Yeah, and I think something about shows like *New Girl* and *Friends*, which in my circles are some of the most popular comfort shows, is that they show younger generations that there is so much waiting for us in our futures. In the first episode of *Friends*, Rachel is 24. Throughout the show, she completely reinvents herself and finds joy through doing so. It's so easy to think that, as college students, these are the last four years of our lives before we just work our lives away, but shows like these help you realize that we have so much time.

Michelle: I think also part of why these shows bring so much comfort is because they still show these characters as human beings. Like comforting. While it has its moments, *Normal People* is by no means an upbeat show or even one that probably most find comforting, but for a young girl who felt like Marianne in high school and Connell in college, the show brings so much comfort to the painful parts of my life.

Michelle: It's a strange thing to feel comfort from a show that has such a dark topic matter, but I think one thing that both of these shows do to give that comfort is have a clean ending. They both show the characters finding a solid ground or some sort of agreement. That last scene with Fleabag and the priest where she says "I love you" and he says "It'll pass." I'm sure if you haven't seen the show this seems like a weird moment but it's a chance to see growth from Fleabag. She doesn't fight back which seems like something she would do. There's like a silent agreement between the two of them in which their entire love story or lack thereof flashes before the audience's eye.

be flawed. Another show that I feel showed this idea is *Normal People*, starring Paul Mescal and Daisy Edgar Jones. Based on the book of the same name written by Sally Rooney, *Normal People* follows the story of Connell and Marianne as they go from high school to college and rely on each other for love and support. Their relationship, in general, is heartbreaking. They go through a lot of misunderstandings and can never quite find the right timing.

I watched this show for the first time in my senior year of high school. In December of that year, I lost a friend in my grade. It was sudden and heartbreaking, and I did a lot of diving into media to cope and distract. About a week after her passing, I decided to turn on an episode of *Normal People*. It just so happens that in that very episode, Connell loses a friend. I had never had art imitate my life so literally. Connell then goes to therapy and expresses guilt towards his friend's death. After my friend passed, I felt so much guilt, and seeing Connell say the same thing was so

how we see Nick Miller go through grieving his dad, Monica changing jobs, Jess getting cheated on, and more and more. They are just human beings who have this group to rely on and by watching we feel like we are a part of the group. We know and see that not only will there be trials and tribulations in life but also that we can triumph over them the same way our favorite characters do.

Kylie: That's why I think I like *Gilmore Girls* so much. A central part of the story is Stars Hollow, the town they live in. Since a lot of the episodes have town meetings, you start to feel like you are a part of the town. I watched *Gilmore Girls* for the first time in 7th grade, and I remember it made me so excited for high school. Sure, there's a lot that's not realistic and my high school years were nothing like Rory's but it was nice to have that thought.

Michelle: I totally agree with that, my high school life could be bland but to come home and experience Rory's made up for it in a way. I think that's what watching these shows can do for us ultimately.

They offer an escape. Whether it is a show intentionally depressing or sad, or a sitcom filled with a loveable cast, we can use these series not only to escape but also to feel.

Room 108

Allison Schicht

I'm in the front-row seat of room 108, watching the red curtains on all the walls pull back and seeing every memory I ever made in room 108 start to play. If anyone ever told you that walls don't talk, they lie. The walls speak every time I'm in room 108. Instead of words, they use memories, and one gets shown to me every time I walk into the room.

A memory might consist of the first class I took in this room. Every seat was filled, and I recognized zero faces. My confusion was apparent and endless. Some of the confusion was because of the class. It was one of the first college courses I took that was actually difficult. It also didn't help that I was regretting my choice of transferring. I was a sophomore then; a few months passed, and I still didn't know anyone. I continued to regret transferring for many days.

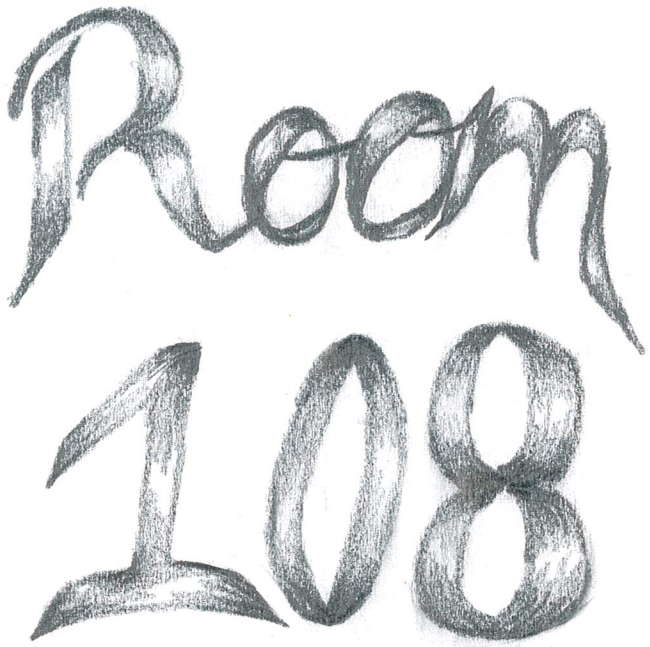
Another memory gets played. I'm in a different class, but I recognize more faces this time. I'm more comfortable in my own skin. My confidence is shaky, but it's not non-existent. I talk to strangers, ask them about their weekends, and get to know them. I have become more friendly. People became recognizable to me, and I was recognizable to them. I no longer felt like a ghost who was roaming the halls. Thoughts of transferring only lived in the back of my mind.

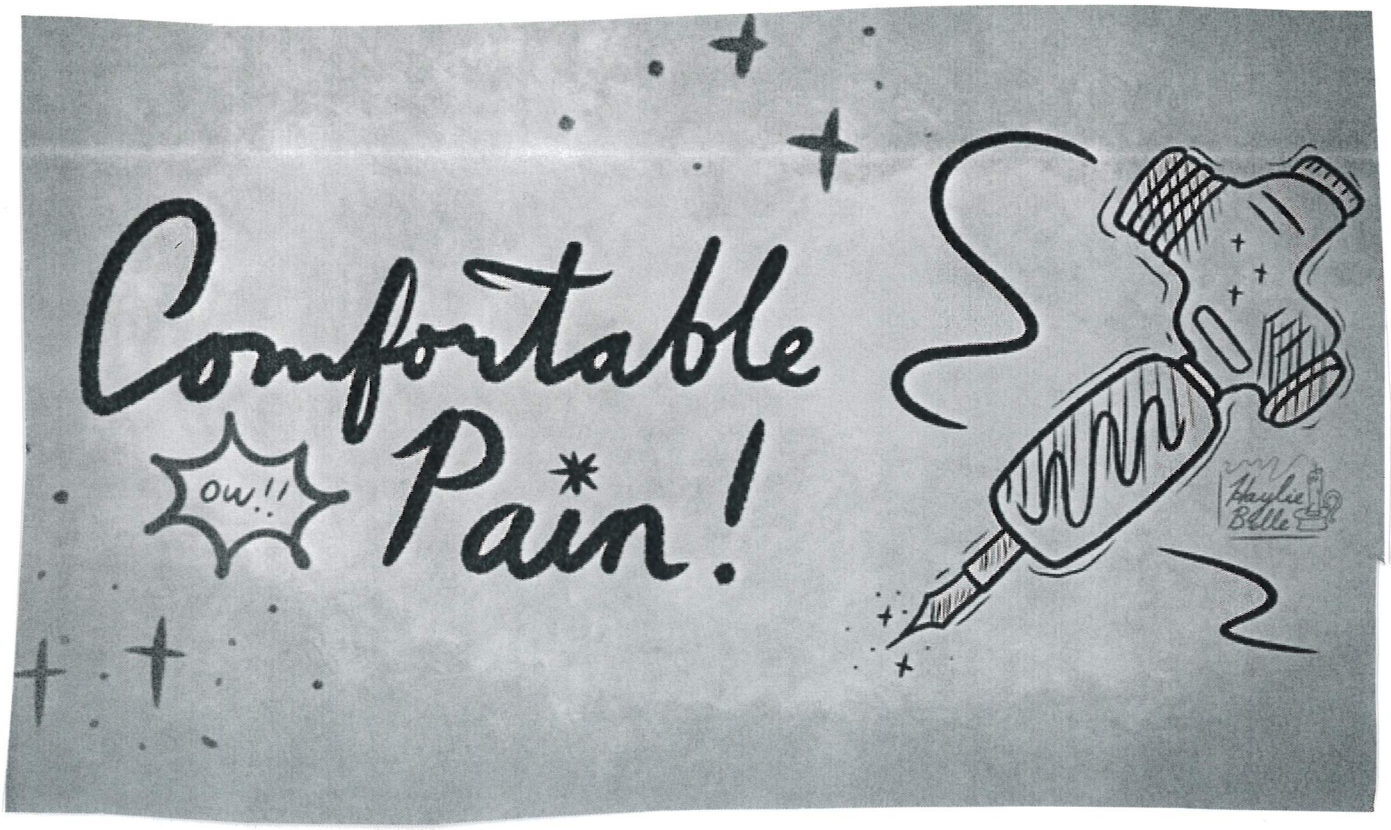
A different memory of me, in another class, in the same room. Every face is recognizable. I talk in every class, encourage others to speak, and learn to overcome many fears. It is such a difference from a few years ago where I never dared to speak in class because I was deeply afraid of miscommunication. It is a miracle the difference a few years can make. Any thoughts of transferring completely evaporated.

As I walk into room 108 during my last semester of college, I am constantly getting reminders of every class I took here - the good, the bad, and the painful. I joke that I despise this room with my friends. There is not an ounce of sunlight that reaches this room. Its grey walls make the room dreary, and the

bright white lights make it feel like a hospital. But when all is said and done, I will miss it. The undeniable truth is that I would not be who I am today without the classes I took in room 108.

I am not the same person I was before room 108. To be honest, I fear who I am without it. This room has become a comfortable place for me, no matter what feelings it elicited from me. A room never gave me as much power or confidence to be who I am as this room did. Will I still have that when I leave? Will the memories still get played? I am going to graduate this semester, which will force me to leave this room behind. My throat closes up at the unbearable thought of life after graduation. The safety of room 108 will no longer be available, and I have to face the horrors of the outside world. I have no idea what lies ahead, and I am terrified. But, while I am afraid, I am also prepared. Room 108 has taught me new perspectives, resilience, freedom to be who I am, and how to think for myself. I will have to leave this room, but I won't have to leave everything. I will take everything I learned with me and every memory I have made in this room.





I Paid Someone to Stab Me (And I Would Do it Again)

Blood, sweat, tears... ink?

Last week, I walked into a shop playing dad rock on three different televisions, ate every single blue raspberry candy from the receptionist dish, and laid down to get the final touches upon my previous tattoo. After two hours of the needle to my thin elbow skin, I got up, paid my artist all my college-job-money, and headed home. As I listened to my car playlist and felt the itch of the plastic bandage on my arm, I waited for the pain to dull and I wondered– what is truly behind the satisfaction of getting a tattoo or piercing? Why do we accessorize ourselves in this way? Is it a celebration of art, or just an excuse to 'feel' the temporary pain of piercing or tattoo needles?

To answer these questions, I took a look at a bit of tattoo history, asked a few of my tatted friends about their experience, and shared my own tattoo testimony.

~Free tattoo idea~

Historically, tattoos and other body modifications have been used as symbols of status, individuality, and personal beliefs. The earliest tattoos can be traced back to the Egyptians, who utilized bronze needles to poke dark soot into the skin as pigment- ouch! Read more about ancient Egyptian tattooing here.

These tattoos were often in simple patterns of lines or diamonds, or in some more elaborate cases, showcasing the likeness of gods or deities. In Native American history, tattoos were a symbol of one's accomplishments, especially chin tattoos to remember life milestones. Read more about Inupiat– the Native tribe of Alaska– and their tattooing practices here. Across many cultures, tattoos have held significance in different ways.

In early America, the first instances of American traditional tattoos emerged in the early 20th century, popular among sailors who believed that symbols of anchors and merfolk would protect them at sea. These tattoos were done with singular needles and scarce ink, making for a style marked by bold, minimal colors and thick black outlines.

Tattoos in American culture became symbols of rebellion, and some may say they still are, but tattoo as an art form has become much more respected and revered in most communities. As specific styles emerged and the tattoo world opened to new, wackier ideas– such as new school pineapples with an all-seeing eye– the idea of stylizing one's own skin as an art canvas has become more widespread in the 21st century. The media began to portray tattoos as an art form, such as many celebrities showcasing their tattoos on the red carpet, and even media built directly around the practice of tattooing. Take Ink Master, a series from 2012 still running today (same age as Loco Mag!), blending the art of tattooing with the chaos of a timer and the pressures of reality tv (with its own spinoff featuring fierce female competitors turned angel judges). In 2025, there are multitudes of people who have tattoos from minimalist pinterest designs, to back pieces covering every inch. Tattoos have become a normalized lifestyle choice, as more and more folks bring their body art to careers, religions, and social spheres.

So- why do we get tattoos?

I bothered three of my tatted friends– my sister with her two fineline pieces, my friend with two fully shaded pieces, and another friend with patchwork of all kinds– and asked them about their motivations and experiences under the ink and needle.

When asked about their motivations behind getting tattoos, all three answered with similar heartfelt stories. "The way we portray ourselves through art is very meaningful," said my sister, who sports her birth flower and a piece that incorporates her love for the Jersey shore. My second friend, whose pieces include a death's head moth and bundle of cleansing herbs, says that, "having parents with tattoos influenced me, and having a matching one with my dad means a lot. [The herb bundle] represents protection and spirituality, which is comforting in the face of a tumultuous relationship with religion". The third treats tattoos like a stamp of devotion, that, "I like to represent things I love on myself". Of everyone I spoke to, and most folks I know, tattoos represent personal expression and tribute to important aspects of the person's life.

But we're here for the namesake- the Comfortable Pain of it all. So, how did the experience feel for these people? Was it nail-biting pain, or an odd sense of comfort? For my second friend, it all had to do with the artist. "My first tattoo experience was weird because I didn't get to pick the artist. For the second one, I chose the artist, and she made the experience much more comfortable". For my third friend, the overall care during the tattoo is essential, as they recounted being offered breaks, snacks, drinks, and the like. My sister, whose tattooing experience I witnessed firsthand, says that, "I mean, getting a needle into your body is obviously not the best feeling, but once your body adjusts I think it feels almost comforting"-- and she has always had a fear of needles! I suppose the dedication to the art overcomes the fear of the needle.

None of my friends were deterred by the pain– all three said they have plans for more tattoos in the future, representing more important things to them.

As for my own experience, as I was sitting in the chair listening to dad rock with my elbow bent at a strange angle, I felt a mix of nerves, pain, and gratification. My tattoo experience was fulfilling because it was the completion of a prior tattoo I hadn't had the money or the concrete design for yet. I had gotten the original tattoo a year prior, on a weekday in February that I had made the appointment for only a day before. I had not had a chance to meet the artist, discuss my plans, or even see the inside of the studio. The tattoo was successful, but it was not what I had final plans for. After spending the time to plan ahead and find an artist that suited me– the same as my sister's two tattoos– I was able to bring it all to fruition. Even I didn't know what my finished piece would look like, but after I sent an email with some rough sketches and overall ideas, Adam Silfies of Revelation Tattoo was able to craft me a piece I'm very happy with. The new ink incorporates my pre-existing rune and flowers into a feminine, artsy piece spanning my inner arm. I am very happy with it!

Like my friends' experiences, my parents and extended family all had tattoos throughout my youth, and I come from a family of artists so it was no surprise that we all decorated ourselves how we saw fit. My mother has a sleeve of flowers and my father a shoulder piece from his youth. My tattoo was also a symbol of devotion to an aspect of my life– the rune and dragon pay homage to my favorite fiction series growing up, and the flowers surrounding it symbolize growth intertwined with the things we love and see pieces of ourselves in. The experience of being under the needle itself was harrowing, I cannot lie– but again, my artist was comforting and I was able to sit for the hour and half it took to finish the ink.

Extremely satisfied with the completion of my tattoo, I am able to share this article with you all and remind you that sometimes, the pain can be worth it to find comfort in expressing yourself.

Featured image by Haylie Jarnutowski.

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